

# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Cunningham, Sheila ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6371-6696> (2013)  
Teaching a diverse student body – a proposed tool for lecturers to self-evaluate their approach  
to inclusive teaching. Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in  
Higher Education, 8 (1) . pp. 3-27. ISSN 1750-8428 [Article]

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/11029/>

## Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

## **Teaching a diverse student body – a proposed tool for lecturers to self-evaluate their approach to inclusive teaching**

Sheila Cunningham  
*Department of Natural Sciences*  
*Middlesex University*  
[s.cunningham@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.cunningham@mdx.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

Higher education moved from elite to a mass system in England over the last two decades under New Labour's policy of developing social mobility and knowledge economy. As participation in HE almost reached the target 50% it resulted in greater diversity and associated demands on institutions of the needs of diverse students. The increasing need for university lecturers to be cognisant of and responsive to such diversity is increasingly important. Research indicates that lecturers who practice inclusively benefit all students' not just specific groups yet there remains variable practice in some areas a dissonance between espoused versus actual practice for inclusive teaching. This article describes the background and stimulus for development of a Self Reflective Tool which emerged from part of a doctoral project examining lecturers' perceptions of WP and diversity and their pedagogical approaches. The proposed tool is mapped with the UK Professional Standards for teaching and supporting learning dimensions and encourages consideration of the context, preparation, evaluation, strategies for promoting learning and affective and sensory elements of learning.

**Key words:** Inclusive Practice, Reflection, Diversity, Pedagogy,

### **Introduction**

The expansion of the higher education system to approximately 50% of school and college leavers, and more mature learners under the swathe of New Labour policies resulted in greater student diversity. This, in part, has been driven by the widening access and participation policies and funding demands in the United Kingdom (UK) with

alongside other legislative changes associated with equality rights and entitlements. Increased diversity has been coupled with concern about student success within higher education (HE) (May & Fan, 2009) and beyond in employability (National Audit Office, NAO, 2008; Thomas & Jones, 2007). But *increasing* participation does not necessarily imply *widening* participation. Indeed it is clear that increasing participation in some respects actually increases class and ethnic differentials and differences, though not necessarily in all institutions. In short diversity from WP is a varied picture with each institution having its own issues with defining and identifying diversity for themselves. Thomas (2006) argues that admission to HE is insufficient, students also need to be able to succeed. The concept of 'success' however also varies amongst institutions. In its broadest sense this could include retention, completion and employability (HEFCE, 2009) but also addresses a relatively recently measured benchmark of the 'student experience' of which key elements are teaching and learning, assessment and feedback and general academic support (NSS, 2012). May and Bridger recognise that this is likely to be a continuum of practice (May & Bridger, 2010) and that to be inclusive institutions fully involve and incorporate the individuals within it:

*The dual approach to change, of the institution and individual, acknowledges that policies and strategies are not only interpreted and transformed into practice by those who work within the framework provided by them, but also that they are, almost inevitably, developed by individuals through the agency of their own personal and professional values, attitudes and beliefs. Hence the individual is at the heart of effecting transformative change.* (May & Bridger, 2010, p. 84)

The literature does at times revolve around disability, however, Thomas (2006) maintains that inclusive practice will benefit all not just specific groups. Research and approaches to address the quality of teaching and learning experiences especially for diverse students has emerged in the last few years. This reveals complex issues of definition and understanding (of diversity), identity, social mobility but also of pedagogical research and scholarly approach to teaching and the congruence between espoused and actual practice (Hounsell & Hounsell, 2007; David, 2008). From a personal level I have been a staunch advocate of 'widening participation' promoting inclusive teaching approaches and acted for some years to raise awareness of it within my own institution advocating incorporation of this teaching and learning practice. This prompted my own doctoral research project into 'Lecturers' Perception of Widening Participation and their own Pedagogical Practice within a 'post 92' university in North London'. The outcomes from one part of this three strand project prompted the questioning of how to

support and improve pedagogy for diversity. More fundamentally this involved asking how to support lecturers to evaluate and reflect on their own practice to determine inclusive (or exclusionary) aspects. A summary of the key findings of the research study then were:

1. A mixed understanding 'widening participation' and 'diversity' among the lecturers interviewed.
2. There was a mixed pedagogical approach by lecturers from sensitive and intuitive support to lack of awareness of any part of students' lives or experiences.
3. An overall perception of 'widening participation' as associated with possessing 'deficits' and requiring remedial approaches.

This resonated with Hockings, Cooke, Bowl, Yamashita and McGinty(2008) research which concluded that diversity is a highly complex phenomenon within and between institutions and that there is no quick 'fix' to address the various needs of diverse students. Hockings et al (2008) also reported that some university lecturers think that students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds lack the cultural capital, prior knowledge and study skills to excel at university, and that their job is to remedy this 'deficit'. Overwhelmingly even now ten or more years since the emergence of the access and 'widening participation' agenda there is still a need to develop inclusive pedagogic practices and curricula that take account of the diverse interests and needs. In my own local research I found a persistent question from lecturers' what does inclusive practice look like?' 'How can I ensure inclusive approaches for all students?' One begs the question that with all the pedagogical research looking at improving practice for diversity why do staff not act on it? It would seem that lecturers' either lack the need or opportunity to reflect upon their own identities as lecturers, to consider issues of cultural, social and educational diversity and difference among students, and to be aware of their impact on the learning and teaching environment and their learners. The question remains how can lecturers reflect on their own diversity and teaching approaches and ensure they are practising inclusively. What practical steps can lecturers take to ensure or deepen inclusive practice? One output from my own research was the development of a self-evaluation reflective tool to enable lecturers' to focus on their own practice and challenge their pedagogical approaches as 'fit for

purpose'. Initial piloting with has been positive so far with amendments made to address perceived areas which lacked clarity and this is on-going.

### **Context for development of Self Reflective Tool**

The doctoral project mentioned above which inspired the need to develop an individual self-reflective tool concerned WP at one university. As a case study the key findings and suggestions focus on one institution however the issues do reflect some of those in the wider sector and add to the growing resource base of practical practice approaches and awareness. This institution is a large post 92 university with a wide array of programmes and a student population which reflects the wide range of ethnicities, ages and socio-economic groups reflective of North London. Additionally the entry profile of students varies enormously from 'A' levels to BTEC courses or Access courses and even Foundation routes through to degree courses. The findings emerged from one strand of this research in which focus groups and follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve lecturers across a wide variety of disciplines and subject areas. The two other strands involved student perspectives and institutional commitment. WP was understood, not surprisingly, from a multiplicity of perspectives and possessing a multiplicity of meanings and challenges for departments and discipline areas a conclusion also reported in the wider sector by Stevenson, Clegg and LeFevre (2010). Not all discipline areas engaged with WP in the same way even with under the same policy umbrellas with local interpretations resulting in diverse practices and approaches. Policy and strategies, it was felt 'targeted' groups, however WP and diversity was wider than this and it was unclear how to approach 'WP students' at the classroom level as they were not an overt entity to target. One theme which emerged to varying degrees was the perception that WP was a deficit state to be endured and remedied by specific personnel (i.e. for specific learning needs) or by varied 'bolt-on' provision. The potential therefore was for barriers and blocks to learning illustrated in the types of relationships and connections between students and lecturers. This was accompanied at the same time by an overarching discourse of social advancement.

Narratives from some lecturers captured some rather awe inspiring examples of engaging and reflexive practice (and caring) attitudes but these remained individualised and in silos. The challenge therefore is how to capture this practice and disseminate it

into the teaching community. There appeared to be an emotional investment and genuine need to relate and connect with students by some colleagues beyond that of 'work' to one of using 'self' and really wanting to make a difference in students' lives. Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Baynes and Knottenbelt(2007) asserts that 'caring' in the HE sense is demonstrated in concrete behaviours such as giving feedback regularly and availability to students, this was identified by some lecturers, even following campus restructures and consequent availability restrictions.

Some lecturers identified a perceived need for support and training in addressing WP and diversity. This raises the question of type of staff development and the appropriateness of it. HEFCE (2009) identify that teaching is a highly skilled profession and as such professional development for enhanced teaching is one of their strategic aims (ibid: 15) and that this includes, as part of it, WP. The research did raise issues of a perceived gap in language, social skills (communication) and expectations of both the lecturers and the students. This appeared to create barriers to learning for diverse students

*'some of our foundation students emm need further development in terms of social skills ummm they come to the university and they don't know when to speak and what sort of words to use'*  
(Lecturer FG 2)

The way students perceive their relationship with lecturers and tutors is central to students' academic lives with small behaviours making a big impact. Some lecturers commented that it was not their role to get to know students and held firm views that teaching was imparting received knowledge:

*'once the students get here, they're all students and the background that they have is notuppermost in my mind my objective is to, is to...try to get students to grasp a concept'*  
(Lecturer 3).

One lecturer did identify that the aim of the PGCHE is to challenge preconceptions but not to provide a 'toolbox':

*'[the] role is to help students navigate their way around y'know particularly at level one and what um is necessary information and to be discriminatory'* (Lecturer 9).

Interestingly, some lecturers did want a 'toolbox approach' to enhance their skills. One lecturer identified that they '*learned on the job*' finding the PGCHE a '*waste of time*' (Lecturer 5) preferring to teach based on personal memorable experiences of charismatic lecturers. Two lecturers identified the role of lecturers (and HE) as: '*to inspire students*' (Lecturer 3) and '*to help them achieve*' (Lecturer 8). These indicate the varied perceptions of the role of the lecturer and thus of lecturer identities.

*'knowing this group is diverse does not affect my teaching, we try well, at least I try, to give them as many real life examples and scenarios as I can so that they can apply everything in their learning to those situations'* (Lecturer 2)

A number of studies have shown that many educators claim to be putting student-centred learning into practice when in fact teacher-centred approaches still dominate (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003; Hockings, 2009). This may be due to professional rigour, local resourcing or institutional issues or perhaps even lack of awareness of how to be student centred and inclusive.

Bowl (2005) identified that the other aspect of curriculum which could be construed as exclusionary is the relationship with what is taught and the way it is assessed. In this research there were issues of power balances (at times perceived as unequal with lecturers holding the power to 'pass or fail') and confusion over expectations and tacit curriculum processes.

### **Self Reflection and Inclusive Practice.**

Underpinning the concept of inclusive learning and teaching are values of equity and fairness. This means taking account of and valuing students' differences within mainstream curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. One source of inspiration which was central to developing a self reflective resource was the concept of 'Universal Design' which is commonly used within the disability literature. Originally emanating from the field of architecture, Universal Design's original aim was to inform the design of products and environments to be usable by all people (CAST, 2011) and has evolved into a curriculum design framework. This approach incorporates building or developing three 'networks' to programme the brain to enable learning for diverse groups:

recognition of learning, strategic networks and affective networks (or the what, how and why of learning). This provides a valuable inspiration in considering diversity.

Egbo (2005) argues that for all the rhetoric of fairness, inclusion, diversity and WP, lecturers and teachers continue to adhere to traditional pedagogical practices, unperturbed or unchallenged by pedagogical research and emergent paradigms that provide alternative frameworks for improving experiences and outcomes. Reflexivity as inclusive practice requires that the initial preparation and training, as well as continuing professional development, of academics and other HE professionals, place issues of equality and inclusion and capability at the centre of the curriculum. Lecturers then do need to reflect on and (re)conceptualise their notions of student diversity in order to consider how they might redesign curricula and pedagogy to allow for greater student involvement (Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2010). Hockings (2010) tries to clarify this by defining inclusive teaching as:

*'the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others'.* (ibid: 1)

Thomas (2006) and Egbo (2005) propose self-reflective questions which enable a critical self-reflection by lecturers to promote a critical approach to pedagogy and thereby empowering and developing their students. This was highlighted as important to students and highlighted as an issue in the relatively recent Higher Education Academy briefing (HEA, 2010) regarding students sense of 'fit' in an institution. Successful critical pedagogy requires that lecturers become culturally literate in the sense of understanding where students 'come from' not just ethnically but also in a social sense. This is best engineered through discussions on classroom diversity and pedagogical approaches and critical reflections of teaching observations with a 'critical friend'. The key really is how often a lecturer reflects on their own practice, more probing questions would explore their approaches to diversity and inclusivity (key to embedding WP). Several questions were initially proposed to enable lecturers to reflect on their own practice indicating the expansive varied elements of practice and the influencing factors upon that. However these appeared rather rhetorical as opposed to purposeful and of questionable use for daily practice. These were:



- How often do I reflect on my own practice?
- What are my personal presuppositions of other groups in society particularly those that are different from mine?
- In what ways do my personal history and worldviews affect my teaching practices?
- How do I relate to people that are different to me especially amongst my students?
- In what ways am I contributing to suppressing voices of some groups in society such as those that are represented by my students?
- In what ways do I affirm or devalue the identities of my students?
- Do I acknowledge the wider responsibilities and challenges of my students to 'fitting in' and hence readiness to learn?
- To what extent do I (or my team/peers) question and engage with the efficacy of curricular materials?
- Am I aware of the university's stand to diversity and WP?
- What kinds of resources do I use in my everyday practice? How relevant are they to the lived experiences of all my students? Do I try to include all my students?
- Am I meeting the needs and learning styles of all my students?
- What are my expectations for my students and how committed am I to the success of all?
- How often do I engage in pre- and post- session analysis of my teaching?
- Do I know what support and staff development there is locally or in the wider teaching community to improve an inclusive approach?
- How often do I change my approach in response to analysis of my teaching?
- How current am I with research on critical pedagogy and education in diverse societies more generally?

This is, however, ungainly and rhetorical in approach and more 'action plan' approach devised (appendix 1). These inspired the desire to develop an approach in which lecturers could engage in a cycle of critical reflectivity and examine practice as part of ongoing professional development.

From the literature themes used for my own research and my findings I devised a broad conceptual incorporating four key elements; context, preparation, teaching/instructional

methods and evaluation. This was also aimed to align to the three dimensions of the UK Professional Standards (HEA, 2011) to emphasise the development of excellence in practice. The dimensions of the UKPS are: areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values with the onus on the practitioner to develop the levels as they engage with the Academy. This framework was revised in response to the rapidly changing nature of higher education and the increased emphasis on teaching quality, value for money and support for student learning (HEA, 2011). This model is also structured around several other reflective practice models to promote a logical flow incorporating action and reflection in an iterative cycle. Influences include: Gibb's experiential learning model (concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation), Borton's model (What, so what, now what) and from my own professional background and iterative cycle of: assess, plan, implement and evaluate. This was meant to acknowledge Schön's concept of the 'reflexive practitioner' (1987) in that teaching approaches and 'craft' behaviour would be modified by reflecting on triggers of diversity and pedagogical approaches so repositioning the lecturer to engage with a range of diverse 'learners' positions or perspectives. Schön (1983) argued that reflection could help professionals to develop their practice. Schön saw practitioners as encountering many problems, grey areas and uncertainties in their work, and used the evocative phrase 'swampy lowlands' to describe those areas. Schön suggested professional practice could be developed through a spiral of action and reflection, where the practitioner acts, reflects on the action and plans new action, which is informed by the results of the reflection. The spiral is continuous, and can be interrupted and incomplete, and the reflection will not always solve problems. It could even cause problems. It does however help bring uncertainties to the surface, and provide a means of looking for solutions. Reflective practice should be viewed as an umbrella concept - a theme that permeates all work as a university teacher.

### ***Teaching context***

Learning does not occur in a vacuum but as part of a programme of study or professional development and learners construct meaning from information (Maclellan, 2001). Students navigating the landscape of HE especially first years are potentially vulnerable to alienation by confusion as to language and organisation of HE including the team members and their roles, the learning environment, who to contact for help

and general 'disorientation' or alienation (Harvey, Drew & Smith, 2006; Yorke, 2008). Context is critical then for the initial foundations to scaffold learning experiences.

### ***Preparation for teaching:***

Student-centred pedagogies, with their emphasis on collaborative learning, are generally accepted as effective in encouraging students from different backgrounds to engage in learning in higher education (Thomas, 2002, Haggis, 2006). Much of the literature confirms the relationship between student-centred pedagogies and student success. A key factor then in engaging students is to connect with their interests, experiences, aspirations and future identities (Hockings *et al.*, 2008; Zepke & Leach, 2005) and viewing them as individuals within a group and adopting strategies to reinforce the individuality and 'connection' for example by using names and greeting strategies.

### ***Teaching/instructional methods:***

Lecturers do need an awareness of the diversity in their classrooms and to coordinate interaction between students to maximise learning for diverse groups. This is perhaps best approached through critical self-reflection and the development of a repertoire of 'craft' skills (Hockings 2011). Learning styles, emotional and sensory aspects of learning and a myriad of other theoretical considerations influence a positive learning experience. However these are only achieved if lecturers' engage with a scholarly approach to teaching and learning. Hounsell *et al* (2004) concludes that lecturers often base their teaching on their assumptions about students' lives and interests or about what 'the average' student should know. In some instances their approach is based on their own memorable experiences even given the time lag since their own experiences. Flexible learning and teaching strategies that allow students to apply what they are learning to their own interests are likely to engage a wider range of students (Hockings, 2009; Zepke & Leach, 2007). However focussing on one group may alienate others (Hounsell *et al.* 2004) and as such a wider repertoire of engaging approaches are needed which includes feedback and strategies to enable students to see progress. E-learning has been proposed as a catalyst for diverse pedagogies however has also been reported to result in feelings of isolation and alienation if used extensively (Newland, Jenkins & Ringan, 2006; Seale, 2006) or potentially insensitivity around

cultural factors (Alexander, 2006). Interestingly Corfield and Pearson (2007) in their research found that it was the academic staff not students who had deficiencies in relation to learning technologies. The classroom conditions are important in promoting a 'positive attitude towards diversity among the whole student body' (Matthews, 2009 p.234) and opportunities to open discussion of diversity and needs for full academic engagement. Assessment too is an issue for consideration particularly objectivity, clarity and transparency and the need to ensure a fair and valid system of assessment (Yorke&Longden, 2004) and is endorsed by students (Lizzio et al, 2007). Furthermore, a number of studies explore whether traditional forms of assessment are fair for students from non-traditional backgrounds and found wide variability and some exclusionary aspects (Leathwood, 2005) perhaps due to tacit expectations or 'norms' of writing or presenting. Bloxham (2007, 2009) exposes the 'fragile enterprise' of grading students against only 'tacitly understood' criteria adding another exclusionary element. Several researchers point out the differences in attainment and performance among groups such as those with vocational qualification, certain ethnicities and family background (income and class) (Broecke&Nicholls, 2007; Richardson, 2008).

### ***Evaluation of teaching***

The literature is replete with the benefits and challenges of peer review of teaching (Bethiaume, 2006) and regardless of the contentions some form of 'mirror' is needed to determine the reception but also the quality of the teaching (and learning) experience. Supported reflection and critical productive peer dialogue (Bell, 2001, McMahon, Barrett & O'Neil, 2007) are some sources but in addition consideration could be given to students perceptions of their learning following a lecturers' teaching (Kember, 2000) as opposed to end of module or course evaluations. Considering feedback from students and professionals and encouraging dialogue with those responsible for curriculum design can encourage the use of teaching and learning methods and materials that will enhance the learning of all students (Inclusive Curriculum Healthcare Sciences and Practice)

## Promoting a self-reflective process

This tool is still in development however it has been disseminated to departments and practitioners through workshops and staff development events particularly those focussing on Inclusive Practice. Initial feedback is encouraging but somewhat mixed. Thus far ten lecturers have submitted feedback (of which four were external to my organisation) and comments have varied from '*useful it made me think about my teams approach to teaching and learning*' (Feedback 1) to '*it would be good if you had time ..*' (Feedback 6). When asked what they thought the strengths were comments included: it was comprehensive, it was useful, they liked the 'reflective flow with action plan' and felt it was proactive. The limitations were identified as being: not necessarily responsive to local need but a useful a trigger to discuss inclusive practices, could be part of a teaching observation process and could include more overt sections to include student feedback. These are positive in that it generates discussion and practice approaches towards diversity and inclusive practices and in fact what exclusive practice means or looks like. External colleagues have been very positive however this does beg the question of is this 'preaching to the converted' and the impact on those who have not thought of inclusive practice remains unclear. There was a comment on this being a 'paper exercise' and joining all the other competing demands in a lecturing life.

In my own institution this tool was incorporated into staff development workshops on Inclusive Practice and complements a suite of strategies to promote inclusive practice (such as e-learning and innovative feedback). Peer observation of learning is currently undergoing a review to evaluate the current process and purpose. This is an opportunity to incorporate dialogue aspects of inclusive practice however as the literature states there are issues of trust (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005), objectivity, 'compliance' (Shortland, 2004) and potentially performativity with its associated consequences. Furthermore, a one-off peer observation in itself does not necessarily lead to improvement in teaching. The challenge is how to raise teaching quality via the development and sharing of 'good practice' (Shortland, 2004) if peer review were not to be used. These barriers and negative experiences highlight the need for conditions where a process which is not seen as 'judgemental' is more likely to work to improve inclusive practice and involve self and critical structured reflection. Åkerlind (2007) advocates that lecturers who develop an instrumental repertoire do not necessarily develop as inclusive practitioners unlike lecturers who are challenged to 'conceptual expansion' through engagement with

peer and student evaluation and this I would argue includes critical self-evaluation. Active engagement in pedagogical theory and discourse, critical reflection and collaboration with colleagues are all necessary for developing an understanding of what constitutes good teaching at an individual level, and for real improvement to occur (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; 2005 Peel, 2005). This self-reflective tool is also used with postgraduate preparation for teaching in HE (PGCHE) with newer lecturers. Clearly a raft of approaches is required to embed inclusive practice including 'champions' and internal (or external) show case events of those who do practice inclusivity to disseminate their 'craft' (figure.1). Dialogue and discussion and self-reflection are still the most powerful tools to achieve an awareness and perspective transformation but as May and Bridger (2010) argue can only be effective in a supportive institution and embedded within all levels. Providing the opportunity for debate and critical discussion among colleagues aimed at improvement of practice would ideally lead to an increased sense of collegiality and eventually reach a '*tipping point*' with more staff practising inclusively than not (May & Bridger, 2010 p. 65). As Booth (2003) argues '*Inclusion is a never-ending process, working towards an ideal when all exclusionary pressures within education and society are removed.*' (p.4)

There are several other aspects which do need consideration and engaging in critical dialogue. These include informal relationships which students have with staff. Mertz (2007) and Bowl (2005) suggest that teacher identity, teaching approaches and methods of questioning and facilitating are key factors influencing who is included or excluded in a lesson. They argue that if students' backgrounds and experiences are not given voice, the differences that they reflect may be pushed to the margins. Matthews (2009) looks at disabled student identity and the conditions under which they can express their differences and disclose issues. Matthews observed that some lecturers avoid discussion about this element which then limits students' opportunity to engage academically. Hockings (2009) and Zepke and Leach (2007) argue that lecturers' understanding of, and attitudes towards, student diversity can influence their teaching practice. This is hard to determine and encourage staff to reflect on but key principles may be drawn from the above discussion on self-reflection for inclusive practice. The key aspect is attitude, approach and visibility which may be constrained by structures and environments within HE. Nesbit, Leach and Foley (2004) write about 'great teachers' and indicate that they:

*'think strategically and act with commitment. .... But these teachers have more than skill; they also think and act at a number of levels. Such teachers have a deep understanding of themselves and their students, and of the organisational contexts in which they work. They think 'on their feet', and take a long term view of their work'(p.74)*

This is something to aspire to indicating not just a 'task' approach but a flexible responsive one. There is a multitude of resources for supporting inclusive practice and this is growing in no small part because it does address the student experience for all students. However the knowledge or even use of these by lecturers is unclear. Hockings *et al* (2012) developed open education resources and an Inclusive Teaching website exists (on Open University site) although clearly this is not widely known by lecturers in my own institution and hence not utilised reaffirming not so much as resistance but a state of being 'consciously unknowledgeable'.

**Figure 1.** Suggested ways to engage staff in Inclusive Practice.



## Conclusion

My own research into lecturers perceptions of WP and diversity and pedagogy enabled me to critically reflect on own personal belief structures and practice in revelation of inclusive practice. Reflection is a powerful tool to raise awareness but also to transform practice and where inclusive teaching is concerned can only improve the student experience and view diversity as an asset in the classroom. Inclusive practice is broad and appears an immense task to try and meet each individual students needs but it is not impossible as research indicates examples of inclusive supportive teaching and means to approach this. It is with this in mind that a Self Reflective Tool which prompts lecturers to consider various aspects of inclusive practice for diverse students groups and be proactive in their approach. This could be used solely by one's self or as part of a suite of staff development approaches (teaching observation, show case events etc) and improving practice for all.

## References

- Akerlind, G. (2007). Constraints on academics' potential for developing as a teacher. *Studies in Higher Education* 32 (1): 21–37
- Alexander, R. (2006). *Towards a comparative pedagogy*. IN R. Cowen and A. Kazamias, (editors) International Handbook of Comparative Education. London. Springer.
- Bell, M. (2001). Supported reflective practice: a programme of peer observation and feedback for academic teaching development. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, 6 (1): 29–39.
- Berthiaume, D. (2006). *Peer observation of teaching in higher education*. Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, University of Southampton.
- Bloxham, S. (2007). A system that is wide of the mark. *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26 October. Retrieved October 2012 from: [www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=310924&sectioncode=26](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=310924&sectioncode=26)
- Bloxham, S. (2009). Marking and moderation in the UK: false assumptions and wasted resources. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 34 (2): 209–220.



- Booth, T. (2003). Inclusion and exclusion in the city: concepts and contexts. In Potts, P. (2003) *Inclusion in the City – Selection, schooling and community*, London, RoutledgeFalmer
- Bowl, M. (2005). Valuing diversity in the social sciences curriculum. *Learning and teaching in the social sciences*, 2(2), pp.121-136.
- Broecke, S. & Nicholls, T. (2007) *Ethnicity and degree attainment* (ResearchReport RW92). London: Department for Education and Skills
- CAST. (2011). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0. Retrieved October 2012 from: <http://www.cast.org/index.html>
- Corfield, G & Pearson, E. (2007). The Use of ICT in Teaching and Learning – the Pervasive Solution. *Proceedings 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference HEA/ICS Southampton August 28-30<sup>th</sup>* Retrieved October 2012 from: <http://www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/events/8th-annual-conf/Papers/George%20Corfield%20final.pdf>
- David, M. (Guest editor) (2008). 'Introduction: Challenges of diversity for widening participation in UK higher education', *Research Papers in Education* 23,(2), 111-112
- Egbo,B. (2005).Critical Pedagogy as Transformative Micro-level Praxis. *AE-Extra*.June-July. Retrieved October 2012 from: <http://www.unco.edu/ae-extra/2005/6/Art-4.html>
- Haggis.T. (2006). Pedagogies for Diversity: retaining critical challenge amidst fears of 'dumbing down'. *Studies in Higher Education* 31 (5): 521- 535.
- Hammersley-Fletcher, L. and Orsmond, P. (2004). Evaluating our peers: is peer observation a meaningful process? *Studies in Higher Education*, 29, 4: 489-503.
- Hammersley-Fletcher, L. & Orsmond, P. (2005).Reflecting on reflective practices within peer observation.*Studies in Higher Education*, 30, 2: 213-224
- Harvey, L. Drew, S, & Smith, M. (2006). *The First-year Experience: A Review of Literature for the Higher Education Academy*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). (2009). *Future support for teaching enhancement and widening participation: Outcomes of consultation*. Retrieved October 2012 from: [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_30/09\\_30.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_30/09_30.pdf)
- Higher Education Academy. (2010). *Framework for action: enhancing student engagement at the institutional level* Retrieved October 2012 from:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/studentengagement/Frameworkforaction\\_institutional.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/studentengagement/Frameworkforaction_institutional.pdf)

Higher Education Academy. (2011). *UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting in HE*. Retrieved October 2012 from:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/ukpsf/ukpsf.pdf>

Hockings, C. Cooke, S. Bowl, M. Yamashita, H & McGinty, S. (2008). Learning and Teaching for Social Diversity and Difference in Higher Education- towards more inclusive learning environments. *Teaching and Learning Research Briefing No. 41* TLRP/ESRC.

Hockings, C. (2009). Reaching the students that student centred learning cannot reach. *British Educational Research Journal* 35 (1): 83-98.

Hockings, C. (2010). *Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: a synthesis of research*.

EvidenceNet. Higher Education Academy. Retrieved November 2011 from:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/EvidenceNet/Syntheses/inclusive\\_teaching\\_and\\_learning\\_in\\_he\\_synthesis\\_200410.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/EvidenceNet/Syntheses/inclusive_teaching_and_learning_in_he_synthesis_200410.pdf)

Hockings, C., (2011). Hearing voices, creating spaces: the craft of the 'artisan teacher' in a mass higher education system. *Critical Studies in Education*. 52 (2): 191-205

Hockings, C. Brett, P & Terentjevs, M. (2012). Making a difference – Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education through open education resources. *Journal of Distance Education* 33 (2): 237-252

Hounsell, D. & Hounsell, J. (2007) Teaching-Learning Environments in Contemporary Mass Higher education . IN: N. Entwistle and P. Tomlinson. *Student Learning and University Teaching. Monograph Series II No 4: Psychological Aspects of Education: Current Trends*. Leicester. British Psychological Society.

Hounsell, D. Entwistle, N. Anderson, C. Bromage, A. Day, K. Hounsell, K. Land, R. Litjens, J. McCune, V. Meyer, E. Reimann, N. & Xu, R. (2004) *Enhancing teaching-learning environments in undergraduate courses* (Project Report on L139251099). Economic and Social Research Council / TLRP

Kember, D. & Wong, A. (2000). Implications for evaluation from a study of students' perceptions of good and poor teaching. *Higher Education*. 40 (10): 69-97.

Kreber, C. Klampfleitner, M. McCune, V. Baynes, S & Knottenbelt, M, (2007). What do you mean by 'authentic'? A comparative review of the literature on conceptions of authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly* 58 (1): 22-43

- Lea, S. Stephenson, D & Troy, J (2003). Higher Education Students' Attitudes to Student-centred Learning: beyond 'educational bulimia'?, *Studies in Higher Education*, 28:3: 321 – 334
- Leathwood, C. (2005). Assessment Policy and Practice in Higher Education: purpose, standards and equity. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(3): 307-324
- Lizzio, A. Wilson, K. & Hadaway, V. (2007). University students' perceptions of a fair learning environment: a social justice perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(2), 195-213
- Lomas, L. & Nicholls, G. (2005). Enhancing teaching quality through peer review of teaching. *Quality in Higher Education*, 11(2), 137–149.
- May, H. & Bridger, K. (2010). *Developing and embedding inclusive policy and practice in higher education*. York. Higher Education Academy.
- May, H. & Fan, K. (2009) Developing Inclusive Learning and Teaching Approaches in Higher Education. Retrieved October 2012 from: [http://powershow.com/view1/217fb9-YWNhO/Developing\\_Inclusive\\_Learning\\_and\\_Teaching\\_Approaches\\_in\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Dr\\_Helen\\_May\\_Senior\\_Advis\\_powerpoint\\_ppt\\_presentation](http://powershow.com/view1/217fb9-YWNhO/Developing_Inclusive_Learning_and_Teaching_Approaches_in_Higher_Education_Dr_Helen_May_Senior_Advis_powerpoint_ppt_presentation)
- Maclellan, E. (2001). Assessment for learning: the differing perceptions of tutors and students. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26 (4). pp. 307-318.
- Matthews, N. (2009). Teaching the 'invisible' disabled students in the classroom: disclosure, inclusion and the social model of disability. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14 (3): 229 - 239
- McMahon, T. Barrett, T. & O'Neill, G. (2007). Using observation of teaching to improve quality: Finding your way through the muddle of competing conceptions, confusion of practice and mutually exclusive intentions, *Teaching in Higher Education* 12, 4: 499-511.
- Mertz, E. (2007). *The language of law school: learning to "think like a lawyer"*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- National Audit Office (NAO). (2008). *Widening participation in higher education* HC: 725 2007-2008. London. HMSO.
- National Student Survey. (2012). *What is the National Student Survey?* Retrieved October 2012 from: [http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/faqs/faqs\\_1.html](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/faqs/faqs_1.html)
- Peel, D. (2005). Peer observation as a transformatory tool? *Teaching in Higher Education* 10, 4: 489-504.

- Nesbit, T. Leach, L. & Foley, G. (2004). *Teaching Adults*. In G. Foley (Ed.). *Dimensions of adult learning: Adult education and training in a global era*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Newland, B. Jenkins, M. & Ringan, N. (2006). *Academic Experiences of Using VLEs: Overarching Lessons for Preparing and Supporting Staff*, IN J. O'Donoghue, (editor) *Technology Supported Learning and Teaching: A Staff Perspective*. London: Information Science Publishing.
- Reay, D. Crozier, G. & Clayton J (2010). 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working class students in UK higher education. *British Educational Research Journal* 36 (1): 107-124
- Richardson, J. (2008). The attainment of ethnic minority students in UK higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*. 33, 33-48.
- Seale, J. (2006). *E-learning and disability in higher education: accessibility theory and practice*. Oxford: Routledge
- Shortland, S. (2004). Peer observation: a tool for staff development or compliance? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28, 2: 219-228.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Stevenson, J. Clegg, S & LeFevre, R. (2010). The discourse of widening participation and its critics: an institutional case study. *London Review of Education* 8 (2): 105-115
- Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(4), 423-442.
- Thomas, L. & Jones, J. (2007). *Embedding employability in the context of widening participation*. (Learning and Employability Series 2). York: Higher Education Academy
- Thomas, L. (2006). *Supporting Students to Succeed in Higher Education; Contrasting Staff and Student Views*. Jary D, & Jones R (Editors) *Perspectives and Practice in Widening Participation in the Social Sciences* (C-SAP Monograph No.3)
- Yorke M. & Longden, B. (2004). *Retention and Student Success in Higher Education*. Milton Keynes. Open University Press.
- Yorke, M (2008). *The first year experience of higher education in the UK*. York. The Higher Education Academy

Zepke, N. & Leach, L. (2005). Integration and adaptation: Approaches to the student retention and achievement puzzle. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 6 (1): 46-59.

## **Appendix 1 - Inclusivity in Teaching Self Reflection checklist**

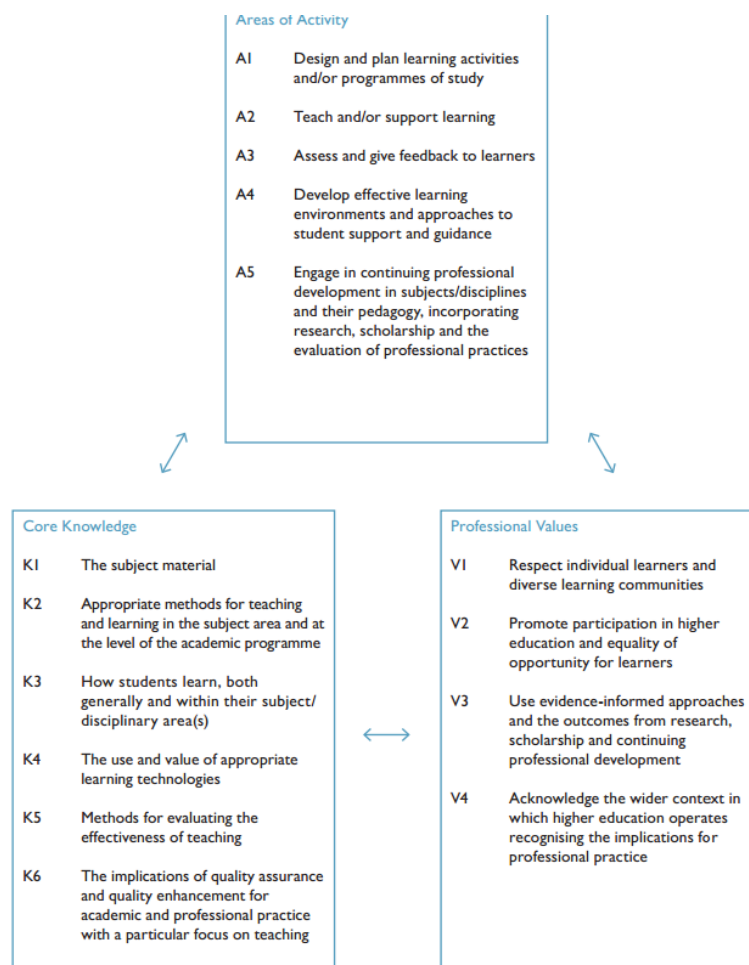
**(S. Cunningham. Sept 2012)**

Learning and teaching are inseparable. Individuals bring a huge variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. We have a wide range of students with differing needs and experiences all of which impacts on learning. This guidance document aims to stimulate your reflection of your own diversity and practice and what impacts student learning experiences. This checklist does not offer solutions to teaching a subject or profession but rather an approach to teaching in a way which helps all students to learn or become experts in learning to achieve the module and programme aims. This is a support and guide to assist you to reflect on and approach teaching in an inclusive way – take from it as much or a little as you wish – it is recommended you use this alongside the Peer Review of Teaching process aid in your updating and evidence base for teaching.

This document is intended to be a self-reflection on practice. It is meant to be developmental and a number of documents have been used to inform it:

- Middlesex University Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy
- School of Health & Social Sciences Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Action Plan
- Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2009)
- The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (HEA, 2011) see:  
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>(aligned to dimensions not to level descriptors)

## 1. Teaching context.



<b>Professional standards: A1, K1, K3, K6, V3 &amp; V4,</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Evidence or Action</b>
Do you ensure students are aware of the aims, learning objectives, syllabus and assessment of the module/programme?		
Do students know how the module/programme connects together or relates to their future career?		
Do students have online/written guidance on where to go to seek help with learning or assessment for your module/programme?		
Are the students aware of the key members of your teaching team, their specific roles are and how to contact them?		
Are you aware of your department/team's approach to teaching and do you share examples of good practice?		

## 2. Preparation for teaching

Professional standards: A1, A2, A4, K2, K3, K4, V1, V2 & V4		Yes/No	Evidence or Action
<b>The 'Who'</b>			
Do you know the range of the diversity of your student group?			
Have you analysed your teaching and the applicability to students?			
Do you try to promote a sense of students as 'individuals' e.g. use their names?			
Have you re-evaluated curriculum/module material to connect with the lived experiences of your student group?			
Have you asked for peer review and feedback on your practice specifically for inclusive or exclusive approaches?			
Have you asked students if they have any particular needs and how you can address them?			
<b>STRENGTHS:</b>		<b>AREAS TO IMPROVE:</b>	

## 3. Teaching methods.

Professional standards: A2, A3, A4, K2, K3, V1 & V2		Yes/No	Evidence or Action
<b>The 'what' of learning.</b>			
Does your classes link to prior knowledge and is this evident to ALL learners (ie how is this addressed e.g. advance organisers, bridging concepts, quizzes)			
Do learners have opportunities to process information and reflect on their learning (e.g. one minute paper)?			
Do you use a range of sensory approaches (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) to the lesson/module?			
Can learners clarify terminology or symbols used in the lesson?			
Can learners with English as a second language			



access keys/glossaries or means to clarify language and text used? E.g. illustrations or multimedia to enhance meanings.		
Do you build in opportunities to build knowledge base and memory transfer i.e. quizzes, concept building, revisit key ideas etc).		
<b>Professional standards:A2, A5, V4</b>		
<b>The 'why' and 'where' of learning.</b>		
Do you build in options for learners to see the relevance of material to their learning and themselves (e.g. sensitivity to race, culture, social or age differences, self reflection and personal values)?		
Is the classroom a safe supportive environment? Have you considered aspects such as transition to/through university, passive learning processes, language challenges etc?		
Do you consider the environment for learning and make adjustments ie room layout, use of space, seating arrangements?		
Is learning 'scaffolded' so students recognise their own learning and see their own progress towards a larger module/course goal?		
Do you plan teaching activities for engagement and consider issues such as time of day?		
<b>Professional standards:A2, A3, K2, K5, V1, V4</b>		
<b>The 'how' of learning.</b>		
Are students provided with opportunities to take control of their learning and plan their own goals or outputs (e.g. own deadlines, negotiate formative deadlines/goals, monitor own progress etc).		
Can learners access different support either formally or informally for learning ie. Feedback, mentors, tutorials, peer learning		
Do you provide (or know of) the option of assistive technology (overlays, font change, videos, audio)?		
Can learners express what they learn in different ways i.e presentation, video or written?		

Is the formative or practice assignment/projects linked to summative (or professional skills or practice) to build learning?		
Is feedback built in regularly and varied to suit all senses and styles of learning (e.g audio, video, verbal, electronic) and designed to feed-forward (to improve work/learning)?		
Do you promote dialogue with students (or among them) about learning and achievements?		
<b>STRENGTHS:</b>	<b>AREAS TO IMPROVE:</b>	

#### 4. Evaluation of teaching.

<b>Professional standards: A3, A5, K5, K6 &amp; V3</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Evidence or Action</b>
Do you ask students to evaluate your teaching?		
Do you ACT on student feedback of your teaching?		
Do you ask students to evaluate their own learning?		
Do you seek peer evaluation of your teaching regularly?		
Do you seek ideas for teaching and improving student learning?		
<b>STRENGTHS:</b>	<b>AREAS TO IMPROVE:</b>	

#### 5. Action Plan

<b>Key areas identified:</b>	<b>Key actions to address these areas:</b>	<b>How will I evaluate these:</b>